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<u>SUBSTITUTE SPECIFICATION</u>

Patent Application of

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TITLE: DATA-DRIVEN INTERNET SURVEY SYSTEM

BACKGROUND – FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to benchmarking different surveys, specifically benchmarking of Internet based surveys.

BACKGROUND–SURVEYS

Surveys or polls are commonly used to collect information. Over time a survey may be modified. Also once a survey is complete another different survey may be used to collect follow-up information. It is difficult to compare different surveys. It would be valuable to be able to simply see the results of a survey as a number or an index that would have meaning over time.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In accordance with the present invention a method of creating benchmarks for surveys that are used to graphically display over time and over multiple different surveys an overall trend.

Objects and Advantages

Accordingly, beside the objects and advantages of the method described in my patent above, some additional objects and advantages of the present invention are:

1.   to provide a method of assigning goals and weights to survey elements.

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2.   to provide a method of determining an index based on survey results against said goals and weights.

3.   to provide a graphical view of the index of related surveys over time to show trends.

4.   to provide a professional web-based survey system that supports various types of survey questions and also supports the necessary goals and weights necessary to produce an index for each survey.

DRAWING FIGURES

In the drawings, closely related figures have the same number but different alphabetic suffixes.

Fig 1 illustrates the survey system process flow including the provisions for benchmarking.

Reference Numerals in Drawings

100	secure server	150	client web site
110	server web site	160	survey target
120	respondent member	170	network
130	client user	180	survey builder
140	panelist		

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DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Surveys are all different, even different versions of the same survey. These differences can be due to questions added, questions removed or questions modified. Question modifications can include changing wording, changing options or changing types (changing a close ended question to an open ended question and vice versa).

Benchmarks provide a quantifiable way to conceptually grade and measure the success of a survey against goals. These benchmarks transcend surveys and differences within these surveys including question changes and wording. The benchmark uses an index that works in much the same way that a stock market index works (by selecting key stocks, weighting them and monitoring their activity as an indication of the overall stock market activity). It is not uncommon for surveys to be conducted more than once. Not only can benchmarking help measure the objectives of a survey and compare surveys, but also, by tracking them over time, measure progress towards overall market research objectives.

Fig 1–Survey System Overview

The survey system provides a computer network that can be used to design surveys in a way that the survey results can be tallied to determine an index, and the index can be correlated with the indices of other related surveys to produce a graph of the trends of the success toward the goals of the surveys. In the preferred embodiment, the survey system is implemented as a web-based survey system. Fig 1 illustrates the process flow of the survey system. Fig. 1 includes information on the physical structure of the computer network of the preferred embodiment, the software and database structure, the functions that the various components and users may use, and the data flow paths for the various actions. In the preferred embodiment, the survey system comprises a secure server 100, a server web site 110, a client web site 150, each connected to a network 170. After client users 130 sign up for membership, they are able to create and modify surveys by securely accessing a survey builder 180. Surveys are defined using predetermined formats for various types of questions. Client users have objectives for their surveys. Each question is assigned a goal answer value relative to one of the objectives. The survey system provides a means for assigning weights that are used to tally the responses to determine an index for each version of a survey. The survey system provides reports showing the results of the survey, including

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graphs of the indices of the various versions of surveys showing the trend of the success towards the goals and objectives.

How Benchmarks Work?

As part of the survey design, clients 130 can define benchmarks. Goals and weights are used to evaluate an index that quantifies the "success" of the survey. The index works in much the same way that a stock market index works (by selecting key stocks, weighting them and monitoring their activity as an indication of the overall stock market activity).

Target values can be assigned to any number of questions on the survey.

Weights are then applied to these questions indicating the impact any one question has on the overall survey index, relative to other questions on the survey.

An index is then calculated for every survey that is completed by a respondent. The index is a percentage that indicates the proximity of the survey answers to the desired goals with 100% indicating that the completed survey likely meets the desired goals. The index can then be used to compare or rank surveys.

The Survey System

In the preferred embodiment, the survey system is a turnkey market research application, available as a subscription-based service through secure Internet access. The service may be accessed from anywhere, anytime through a browser or as a standalone application. As an Application Service Provider (ASP), the service is the only cost. There is no need to purchase hardware, database and application software; they are all included. This service utilizes the system's proprietary technology to deliver a robust, cost-effective and intuitive method for conducting all types of traditional (paper and telephone) and web-based market research:

1. Attitude and Usage
2. Concept Testing
3. Advertising Testing
4. Package/Design Testing
5. Employee Satisfaction/Feedback
6. Promotion Testing
7. New Product Testing
8. Customer Satisfaction

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9. Product Registration

10. Respondent Screening

The survey system addresses many of the issues plaguing the market research industry today. Research professionals will have the ability to focus on performing research without the current headaches and expenses associated with the acquisition and management of the technology and resources regularly required to perform research tasks in-house. The survey system is the complete, turnkey market research solution available from anywhere, anytime.

Fig 1– Survey System Process Flow

Fig 1 illustrates the process flow of the survey system. The survey system comprises a secure server 100, a server web site 110, a client web site 150, each connected to a network 170.

The secure server 100 comprises a member database, a client survey database, survey templates database, a client respondent/other data database, and a respondent member database.

Client users 130, namely client marketers and managers, signup for membership, design, post, and obtain reports, select respondent demographics, and maintain client respondent and other data via the server web site 110.

Individuals who are interested in taking surveys, namely respondent members 120, sign up as respondent members 120 via the server web site 110 and when notified of a survey request, respond to the survey via the client web site 150.

Individuals who match the desired demographics, namely, survey targets 160, are notified of a survey request and then respond to the survey via the client web site 150.

Professionals who have shown a particular understanding or discernment on a subject are invited to be part of a panel. These panelists 140 are notified of a survey request and then respond to the survey via the client web site 150. Panelists may be paid for their participation on the panel.

The survey builder 180 provides a means for client users 130 to define, post a version of a survey, and obtain instant, concurrent results. The survey system allows for certain goals and weights to be associated with a survey. Each version of a survey is benchmarked based on the response's relationship to the goals. These responses contribute

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to an index or benchmark for a survey. The benchmark can be charted over time and over various versions of a survey or set of surveys to determine valuable trend information. As shown in Fig 1, the instant, concurrent results and reports are always available–24/7.

Best Mode

The best mode implementation for this invention is an Oracle database server with a database format as shown in Fig 1. This server 180 would implement a number of programs (collectively, the survey builder 180) that would allow researchers to create surveys comprising a number of different survey questions of various types. The researcher (e.g. client user 130) would assign goals for a survey and assign weights to the answers to each question. The results for multiple respondents would be tallied and the weights applied to determine an index. Further versions of a survey or surveys with similar goals could be correlated by the index. The programs display the indices of various surveys in the form of a graph. All survey creation tools, the surveys themselves, and the reports including the indices would be available from the system via the World Wide Web or via standalone client applications.

Conclusion, Ramification, and Scope

Accordingly, the reader will see that the survey system with the built in benchmarking and index graphs of the present invention provides a means of creating surveys, assigning goals and weights, tallying results to determine an index, and graphing related indices to show trends.

Furthermore, the present invention has additional advantages in that:

(a)   it provides a robust survey creation tool;

(b)   it provides for almost instant results of surveys, especially web-based surveys;

(c)   it provides a way for researchers to easily modify an existing survey and then correlate data from it with that collected via an earlier survey;

Although the descriptions above contain many specifics, these should not be construed as limiting the scope of the invention but as merely providing illustrations of some of the preferred embodiments of this invention. For example, the format of the index graphs can have different styles, and the same relative operation, relative performance, and relative perceived value would result. Also, these processes can each be implemented as a hardware apparatus that will improve the performance significantly.

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Thus the scope of the invention should be determined by the appended claims and their legal equivalents, and not solely by the examples given.

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DATA-DRIVEN INTERNET SURVEY SYSTEM

Abstract: Methods and machines that provide for creation of surveys with a variety of questions. Each survey is assigned goals. Each question is weighted toward the goals. The results of each response to a survey are tallied to determine an index. The index is correlated with the indices of other related surveys to produce a graph of the trends of the success toward the goals.